The Third Force

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(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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TWENTY-SIX EDUCATIONISTS' LETTER

Twenty-six educationists have addressed a letter to the Central Minister of Education and the Prime Minister, deploring the fall in standard of English at the University stage in several States. Let us analyse their letter as reported in the Press. Four clear points emerge from their letter:

(1) The going down of the standard of English has "seriously affected the study of all the subjects" and the standard of our graduates has deteriorated.

(2) Time should be given to the University teachers for adjustment in the change of medium.

(3) Thousands of books, specially reference books, will have to be translated into Hindi or the regional languages, which would involve great expense and would cause considerable delay. The change in the medium, therefore, must wait till books are available.

(4) Universities should be given a right to test the knowledge of English of pupils before admission to the University, to ascertain whether they would be able to read reference books in English.

We shall examine the points briefly.

(1) That the going down of the standard of English has 'seriously affected the study of all subjects' is, alas! too true. But the implied reason, covertly suggested in the letter, is misconceived. Those who have till now passed through the university stage and have graduated, had got full advantage of studying English for eleven years at school, and had mostly learnt all subjects through English. The batches of students that have been denied this good (?) fortune are still to enter the portals of the University. Why then, this fall in the standard of English? The reason is not far to seek though the eminent educationists have failed to locate it. For the last two decades and more there has been a growing resurgence of love for regional languages and nationalism. Students, as a matter of course, have been affected by it. There has been a greater and greater inclination towards the study of and love for the mother-tongue and a markedly greater and greater deviation from attraction for the foreign language, English. This is the main reason why the knowledge of and efficiency in English have received a severe set-back — the set-back that has come to stay and is irretrievable. The reason for deterioration therefore, is not due to the 'undue haste' in the abolition of English but to the natural force of circumstances. If at all, this must bring home to every dispassionate thinker that the time for removal of English as medium at the university stage is now overdue and should not brook delay. As Rajaji once put it, all along till now we have been studying *English* through a variety of subjects; let us now turn to the study of *subjects* through a suitable medium.

(2) Turning to the second point that time should be given to the (university) teachers for a change over of medium, I hope the writers of the letter cannot be unaware of the fact that the necessity for such a change is not an idea of post-independence growth. As early as 1921, if not earlier, the need for such a change was clearly envisaged. Since 1939 when the Indian Governments first took over the charge of provincial administration, the idea has been taking a definite shape and to all except those who fondly dreamt of the perpetuation of English in all walks of Indian life, it was clearly perceptible that the change of medium, first at the high school stage and then at the university stage was knocking at the door. With the adoption of the Constitution of India in 1950, the question of the change over of medium should have been taken as settled for all practical purposes and any plea of 'time' — marking time, perhaps — should not have arisen at all. In fact time is now an essence of the matter the other way about. If all communication, local, at district level, at State-level and at inter-State level is to be carried on either through the regional or the national language from 1965, twelve years hence (and not fifteen years hence — which number seems to have attained a static value for some in spite of the passage of time) does not a heavy responsibility devolve upon schools and universities to help in bringing into being a personnel that would fit into the new set-up? The plea, therefore, that time should still be given is now too late in the day. Mahatma Gandhi once said to the effect that had he the powers of a dictator, he would compel every teacher to start forthwith teaching through the

mother-tongue of the child on pain of dismissal.* The late Shri Kishorlal Mashruwala also recently stated that as far as he was concerned, the question of medium was a settled one, and he for one, if a university teacher, would straightaway begin to teach, in howsoever broken regional language or Hindi, the subjects under instruction. The asking for time on the part of these eminent educationists, therefore looks like trying to stick on to a losing — or a lost — game.

(3) The third plea about the paucity of books in Hindi and the regional languages, would have looked ludicrous and flippant and would not have merited even a reply, had it not been put forward by such distinguished educationists. The reply can be given only in a few words. Create a demand and the supply will follow. If you decide that from 1953 certain subjects shall be taught through a particular language, books will soon flow into the market. That has been our experience at the secondary stage, and today for certain subjects like history, geography, science, arithmetic etc. we have books in the market, — original at that — that would excel foreign publications. Good reference books could be got translated by means of translation bureaus. Even otherwise, English reference books can be carried by a teacher in the class and the purport of the relevant portion be explained in the accepted medium. An excellent article, touching this point, by Shri V. D. Ghate, M.L.A., Bombay, has appeared in the Marathi magazine *Sahyadri*, which merits a perusal with profit in this connection.

The last plea is amusingly naive. It is again a shrewd and subtle way of entering English by the back-door, if pushed out from the front one. It is amusing to find that the criterion for admission of pupils into the university portals is the knowledge of English. The fitness of a pupil any way otherwise, by reason of his intelligence, his grip on a subject, his capacity to understand and debate upon a problem, his ideas of citizenship, national service etc. ; his readiness for manual labour etc. ; — all these do not count. All these would not entitle a pupil to admission, unless he has a sound knowledge of English. The fact is, we have too long been habituated to equate all education with the knowledge of English, to the exclusion of every other consideration. It is time we shake off this obsession. The sound and intensive knowledge of a subject, the capacity to assimilate it and adjust it to our national conditions, originality in approach and a sense of critical appreciation and intelligent discrimination, readiness for social service and want of aversion to manual labour ; sound sense of citizenship and physical fitness, are all these criteria to be discarded if a pupil lacks the capacity to understand and write good English ? Why this extra-ordinary condition for admission into a university, this insistence only on the sound knowledge of English which has assumed now the role of a foreign language and which slowly but steadily keeps on receding into the background of our national life ?

Lastly one word. The writers have called themselves, educationists. We accept their claim to be so called. But one must not forget, that if vice-chancellors of Universities — some appointed temporarily to the post of a vice-chancellor, some lawyers, others solicitors and even businessmen — claim to be called educationists, those who have worked for their whole life in the field of education, who have made original contribution to educational thoughts, ideals and concepts, those who have carried on, against heavy odds, genuine experiments in the field of education, native to the soil and who refuse to believe in indiscriminate transplantation of all that is American or English on the Indian soil, who have been thinking about Indian problems of education and instruction day in and day out — these too, if not entitled to be called educationists, are at least entitled to have a say in the matter.

Bombay, 7-10-'52 ARAVINDLAL L. MAZMUDAR

* Regarding the English medium Mahatma Gandhi says at one place: "Among the many evils of foreign rule, this blighting imposition of a foreign medium upon the youth of the country will be counted in history as one of the greatest."

NOTES

Help the South Africa Satyagraha

The A.I.C.C. has issued an appeal for fund for helping Satyagraha in South Africa, in which it says :

"The Satyagraha campaign in South Africa against racial discrimination and the doctrine of the master race has attracted worldwide attention and sympathy. In India that sympathy has been even more intimate and intense and all shades of opinion share it. The A.I.C.C. at its meeting held at Indore recently passed a resolution on this subject.

"While sympathy has undoubtedly considerable value, it would be much better to translate that sympathy into some kind of direct help. This can only be in the nature of financial help. We appeal therefore, for contributions to the fund to help the Satyagrahis in South Africa. In this matter we hope that there will be no party divisions and that there will be a widespread response from all those who feel as we do, that a vital struggle affecting human rights and liberty is being carried on by Africans and people of Indian descent in South Africa."

Every Indian should contribute his mite to this noble cause, irrespective of caste or creed, or political affiliations. The student world also must earn to contribute their best in this cause. Let it be remembered that the noble fight is to solve in a peaceful manner an issue, which if not done betimes, will drag the peoples of the world to bloody warfare.

Abu, 22-10-'52

A Welcome Move

Government of Madras proposes to introduce a shorter course in medicine. This is a very welcome move. The Minister for Public Health in the course of his reply to a memorandum presented to him by the Coimbatore Medical Association (Oct. 12) referred to this subject and said :

> " In rural areas, medical relief is administered by what you call quacks, who have had no training of any kind. In these circumstances Government have been compelled to consider how they could arrange to give kind of medical relief to people of rural areas." Hence a shorter course in medicine.
>
> But as elsewhere, the (allopathic) medical profession seems to oppose it. The Minister very pertinently asked them, " Why you so vehemently object to having a shorter course for medical men ? Do you want rural people to be at the mercy of quacks for all time ? " And he added, whether there were not different classes of men in other professions — among engineers, arts graduates and others. And he said, " I do not think there is anything absurd or unthinkable in this suggestion of shorter course of medical education. I think you have not bestowed sufficient thought and consideration on the poor people in rural areas who are today suffering from want of the proper kind of medical aid."

This is, I think, a serious charge, which I hope the medical profession will wisely and honourably acquit itself of. The problem is not only for Madras State alone, but is an all-India one.

Abu, 19-10-'52

Gandhi Vichar Parishad

This institution doing its work under the auspices of the Sarva Seva Sangh, Bajajwadi, Wardha, should be introduced to the reader. It completes its first year of working and its Secretary has sent me its detailed report and statement of accounts during the year 1951-52. As the name shows, the Parishad is devoted to the study and research in problems of Gandhian philosophy and programme. The first year seems to have been utilized in organizing the work of the Parishad. The report gives promise of good work starting henceforth. Shri Ravindra Varma has undertaken the project of ' Party System and Sarvodaya ' followed by another equally good one, namely, ' Gandhi's Philosophy and Anarchist School of Thought '. Another worker of the Parishad, Shri S. K. George has undertaken ' A Comparative Study of the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and Albert Schweitzer '. I mention these from many more other undertakings to illustrate the nature of the work going on in the Parishad. The Parishad is organizing a suitable library also for its work.

At the end a suggestion to the Parishad : I hope this work of the Parishad will be in Hindi. I invite all interested in Gandhian studies to contact the Parishad and help it with their suggestions.

9-10-'52 M. P.

MACHINE AND MARKETS

M. Stalin has declared at Moscow, October 2, that " The Soviet Union will not attack capitalist countries." But that is not because he has become a pacifist or a no-war-campaigner, but his studies of the world situation lead him to conclude that,

> " As a result of markets after World War II the capitalist countries are trying to cover up their difficulties by resorting to Marshall Plan, war in Korea, and rearmament. (They are acting) like drowning men clutching at a straw."

And therefore, he feels, he will have no need to attack them ; the capitalist house of cards will crumble down of its own weakness.

How far is this belief of M. Stalin true ? With the help of the machine, modern man's new-found tool or toy, men in the West are acting in two ways — on one side they are mechanizing warfare and devising deadly armaments ; on the other, they are trying to produce cheap consumer goods to such an extent that it creates hunger for markets and still more markets. Really man under modern civilization has created a veritable Frankenstein for himself of his mere tool. Such an invasion of the machine on the human world allied with a scramble for markets does give good reason to believe as M. Stalin does, and hence he fondly expects that the capitalist world will be stewed in its own juice. It is upto that world now to meet his challenge and falsify this dismal prophecy.

The question is : Can it do it ? Will it do it ? Naturally it should ; but with the pathetic belief it has in the machine and in armaments it is difficult to give a certain reply. The capitalist world in the West describes itself as a democratic world ; and it is not wholly wrong. But like national socialism, it is *national* democracy. With a democratic set-up of a sort in their internal affairs, these so-called democratic States are almost imperialist in their relations with others. To their eyes, the world outside is only a market to be captured by them, in the holy cause of raising one's own standard of living. Therefore, as M. Stalin has said in his declaration, "in order to eliminate inevitability of wars, it is necessary to destroy imperialism " ; whether it may be ideological as of M. Stalin's Russia or mercantile or economic as of the Western democracies. It is here that Gandhiji's message is helpful. It tells us to radically revise our ideas of the use of the machine and the basic policy of life and labour in fields and factories. The challenge contained in M. Stalin's prophecy can be met by the so-called democracies only if they shed their aggressive or acquisitive nationalism, which, under present circumstances, almost becomes imperialism.

7-10-'52 MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

HARIJAN

Nov. 1 1952

THE THIRD FORCE

A. J. Muste, whose thought-provoking article in *The Christian Century* is given elsewhere in this issue, was one of the American delegates to the World Pacifist Conference that was held in India in 1949-'50. His burning passion for social justice, his immaculate integrity and other saintly qualities have won him the respect and regard of all who know him. Whatever he writes is, therefore, entitled to the most careful consideration. It is his remarks about what he calls "the third force" that concern us most.

Of late there has been a gradual veering round even outside the Gandhian group of constructive workers to the general outlook and economic programme advocated by Gandhiji. The following in the Socialist Party's manifesto is indicative of the change:

> "Villages will not be just agricultural communities. Rural industries and decentralized processes even of larger-scale industries may be reserved for rural artisans. If the State is to function in a democratic way it is imperative that as large a number of peasants as possible be associated with the administrative machinery......The Commonalty of the State is to be so organized, and sovereign power so diffused that each little community in it lives the way of life it chooses. It will mean that village panchayats (Councils) will have pivotal place in the new set-up. Above the panchayats there will be three layers of administrative bodies; regional, state and union. The panchayats......would be the main local agency for execution of the various Government programmes affecting the welfare of villagers."

In one of his articles some time back, Shri Jayaprakash described what is known as the "Gandhian economy" as "a concrete programme of basic social revolution". He defended the basic principles of Gandhiji's programme, its ethical basis and insistence on the higher values, its revolutionary, non-violent technique and its insistence on economic and political decentralization.

On the other hand, there is a growing dissatisfaction with the way in which the Government machinery is working. The feeling of frustration is driving some people even in Government circles, known for their level-headedness and faith in the possibility of reforming the existing order, to a mood of despair.

People are dissatisfied with the picture which the authors of the Five Year Plan have outlined in their tentative report, and the final report is likely to go even further in the direction of creating a top-heavy cumbrous highly centralized machine rather than alleviate uneasiness, which is already felt on that score. Community projects have their obvious dangers and shortcomings. The dangers have been pointed out by Shri Muste; shortcomings were incisively pointed out by Vinobaji some time back. (*Harijan*, Aug. 30, 1952).

There has of late been some talk of groups and individuals outside the Government, who share the faith in Gandhiji's programme to come together and evolve a common programme of action. There is a danger of the "common programme" of action being reduced to a common programme of denunciation and obstruction. The result would be to add one more to the number of factions already in existence. There is danger also in agreeing on a common end without an agreement on the method or the means. For instance, we want decentralized economy, cottage crafts, local and regional self-sufficiency, resuscitation of the villages and a more equitable distribution of the resources of the State as between the urban and rural population. But unless we agree also that these ends have to be achieved by strictly truthful and non-violent means, we shall land ourselves in a self-defeating morass. The other day a very close friend was referring to what had been achieved in Russia and China as being "much nearer to the Gandhian concept" than what we are doing or intend doing here, "if we leave out truth and non-violence"! I was amazed. What is left of the "Gandhian concept", if truth and non-violence are left out? The revival of *charkha* and cottage industries by itself become simply a reversion to an archaic and comparatively less efficient form of economic activity, which would have only a passing justification under the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed today. They derive their full content and significance from the way of life which they represent — the extent to which they are a symbol and means of realizing a non-violent order of society. It is only in the latter sense that they can have a survival value in the present day competitive world. It therefore betrays an utter confusion of thought to mention the achievements of totalitarian methods in other countries in the same breath with what Gandhiji set before us to realize. The two are dissimilars. A comparison between dissimilars can only mislead.

What can be the common programme of action for those who have at heart the realization of the social order outlined by Gandhiji? I dare say, Vinobaji's Bhoodan Yajna provides a programme *par excellence* for all these groups and individuals. If it is worked out with all its implications, it will inevitably result in the realization of the picture of society envisaged by Gandhiji.

The success of the Bhoodan movement means bringing into existence hundreds upon thousands of five-acre farms owned and worked by peasants, who must put into practice methods of intensive

cultivation to eke out a satisfactory standard of living. And small farm means handicrafts and cottage industries to provide an off time supplementary occupation. It further means cattle-based village economy — full use of cattle-power for cottage industries, irrigation and transport — use of natural fertilizers for the conservation of soil fertility and therefore the care and protection of the cow. The real danger to the cow is not the slaughter house but the invasion of the farm by the power pump, the tractor and the Diesel engine.

What we need immediately is an army of well-disciplined, well-trained technicians who would move in the wake of the Bhoodan Yajna and teach the new order of peasantry, that is being brought into being, intensive and efficient methods of farming, the preparation and use of compost manure — this goes hand in hand with proper disposal of night-soil and therefore the question of sanitation and introduction of co-operative organization for collective marketing and disposal of the farm produce, and for providing the small farmers with costlier agricultural implements and even cattle under joint ownership which they may need for their operations, but which they cannot individually afford to buy.

All this is the work of basic education. Other constructive organizations can and must collaborate. Funds will not be lacking if we set about creating a cadre of technicians and village workers for the purpose on a small scale in selected centres. In fact a beginning can be made with a dozen or two dozen well-trained workers. Let them set up centres for training the required personnel in areas from where the trainees are recruited and which they intend to serve. There will be no lack of finance after the initial batch of workers who will also be field workers in their own right have demonstrated their usefulness.

If we attain a sufficient measure of success in this "third force" we will cut across all party-alignments and become a part of united national effort to bring into being the free India of our dreams for which we fought. It might even make us an object of emulation to our neighbours across the border instead of being an eyesore.

Valmiki Mandir, PYARELAL
New Delhi, 10-10-'52

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PROHIBITION AND PURCHASING POWER

Shri Kanhaiyalal D. Vaidya, M.P., sends from Kishangadh (Madhya Bharat) a harrowing tale of famine and starvation both among man and beast in the Bhil areas of Jhabua, Dhar and Ratlam districts and Alirajpur Tahsil. The whole area is inhabited by about 3 lakhs of Bhils, a scheduled tribe. Food grains, grass and water — all are in great scarcity and Government and non-official agencies are trying to cope with the situation as best as they can. But queerly enough, as Shri Vaidya puts it, "Poverty amidst plenty and starvation with adequate stocks of food grains is a paradox." And he explains the paradox in these words, "There is no dearth of food grains stocked by Government, but there is no purchasing power even among the middle and the poor classes who are dependent on the schduled tribes business." A similar story was reported the other day by a Union Deputy Minister about U.P. famine areas also. Of course, our immediate concern is to help the famine-stricken brethren of ours and pull them through the crisis. But we must look up how best and in a quick way we can build up the purchasing power also. Shri Vaidya has made at the end of his long report, a very pertinent observation in this regard which is worth quoting. He incidentally notes that the Congress candidate was defeated in this area in the last elections. And while discussing its reasons he says:

> "I will mention only one fact in the end and that is prohibition.
>
> "The Bhils demanded prohibition of liquor and as prohibition was in force in the neighbouring borders of Bombay Presidency it was in the interest of Congress policy that the Government should have accepted the demand gladly. But for demanding enforcement of prohibition the poor Bhils offered Satyagraha and faced all sort of repression at the hands of the present Government too. The Government did not accept the just demand of the people and refused to introduce prohibition even in the scheduled area. This is one of the reasons that the tribes have no purchasing power and today are facing starvation.
>
> "This will convince the readers how sincerely the Government machinery is carrying on the scheduled tribes uplift work that Bhils had to offer Satyagraha for prohibition and face repression. Under such circumstances it has become impossible to improve the purchasing power of the starving masses."

Shri Vaidya's remark raises a lot of questions about the Government policy in Madhya Bharat. Is it true that the Bhils had to face repression at the hands of the Government for demanding prohibition? That prohibition does build up the purchasing power of the poor is a fact, as can be actually observed from the Bombay Prohibition Inquiry Report. This only proves that Government should not look to its own interest of income as against that of the people who are really benefited by prohibition. We hope the Planning Commission will come out with a bold plan of an all-India drive for this great reform to which we are pledged.

2-10-'52 MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

AS OTHERS SEE US

Under the caption "Nehru Walks a Thin Wire" A. J. Muste in a recent issue of *The Christian Century* (September 3, 1952) writes:

"Nehru and the Congress party in India are attempting to steer a middle course between the Russian-led and American-led power blocs. Whether they can remain in office for a considerable period and thus have a chance to work out such a programme in the international field depends on whether they can solve India's internal economic problem. This is the problem confronting so many countries today; its essential requirement is a decisive and fairly rapid rise in the standard of living of the masses.

The American Way

"So far the world in general knows only two ways for poor and industrially backward peoples to accomplish this end. One of these is to move toward industrialization under a non-communist, essentially non-collectivist, system. In practice this means a modified capitalist or free enterprise system. Some might prefer to call it a 'mixed economy,' and indeed any economic set-up today which is not basically collectivist will have mixed ingredients. But since the retention of free enterprise is the distinctive factor in such regimes as we are discussing, it seems better to retain that term.

"Taking this general course involves two things for a nation seeking to modernize its economy. One is that a capitalist class (perhaps along with a landholding class) must be permitted to develop, to make profits and accumulate capital, and to build up the power which this implies. Naturally, this development implies also the emergence or growth of an industrial working class. The second factor is that the nation has to get help — capital in the form of loans, machinery, and so forth — from outside. *In practice today this means from the United States, and that involves being to some extent economically and politically dependent upon the United States, drawn into its orbit.* (Italics ours).

The Communist Way

"The second way to achieve rapid industrialization and the power, including the military potential, which goes with it, is the Communist way. This means that though some people may receive disproportionately large incomes, they are not permitted to carry on enterprise for profit. The Communist or Stalinist way also means that you do not to any extent seek or accept foreign aid. For this there are a number of reasons. For one thing, if you are anticapitalist it may not be easy to get foreign aid. If capitalism, by being able to supply help out of its surplus, were made to appear a superior economic system, enterprising people in the beneficiary country might get the idea that they too would like to become capitalists. For another thing, there is the likelihood that one's nation would become politically dependent upon the country providing capital.

"If a ruling group, as in Russia, decides that a nation shall accumulate its own surplus, build its heavy machinery instead of buying it on credit, then it has to sweat the surplus out of its people. In practice this means out of the farmers, since you have to induce workers to man the factories. It means rigid dictatorship so that you can put people to work where you want them. And if you are going to build a substantial military establishment in a hurry, as well as a civilian industrial economy, it will inevitably mean something like the labour camps in Russia where you get work out of people for a few years each on a subsistence or even less than subsistence wage. To say this is not, of course, in any way to condone the horrible cruelties of Soviet labour camps; it is merely to recognize that the institution is not a purely irrational product of the sadism of a crazed dictator.

The Middle of the Road Policy

"China is in substance following the Russian way. Nehru, as was said at the outset, wishes to walk down the middle of the road in foreign relations. He must, however, make a decision on the question of India's economy and here he and the Congress party have decided to follow what might be called the American way, though they hope with many modifications. Thus the Indian capitalist group, which began to develop under British rule, continues in existence and is allowed to grow. Nehru has given assurance that his former socialist profession does not mean that socialism is the practical political goal of the Congress party. Indian capitalists, as is characteristic of capitalism in its early stages, seek great profits and demand protection against outside competition. *Since aid comes from the United States and neither the American Government nor bankers operate on the basis of giving and expecting nothing in return, India under the Congress rule is drawn into or toward the United States political orbit.*" (Italics ours).

After analysing the attitude of the Indian Communists and the potential Communist menace, particularly on India's Northern and Eastern border, the writer proceeds:

"Under the circumstances, the Nehru regime needs American aid. *If it gets a good deal, this will tend to draw it into the American orbit.* (Italics ours). The Sino-Russian bloc will not like this. The Indian Communists will denounce Nehru and the Congress party as captives and tools of the colossus of the white world. If, on the other hand, little American aid is provided, the Congress regime will not be able to raise the standard of living high enough and soon enough to ward off the Communist threat. Furthermore, it is still an open question whether even under favourable circumstances a modified, middle-of-the-road capitalism can exist in a country like India.

Gandhi's Way

"This brings us to the final section of this sketchy survey. Mahatma Gandhi preached a 'Third Way', neither capitalism nor communism, for India and indeed for the world. He envisaged a much less materialistic, a spiritually based economy. The type of industrialism characteristic of both capitalist and communist economies he rigidly rejected. His economy was based on agriculture making use of a limited form of industrialization rather than an industrialism dominating agriculture. Politics would likewise be decentralized, the attempt to build a modern power-state being rejected. The government would be essentially based on non-violence for both moral and religious reasons and because a nation equipped with a modern military establishment would have to have a modern industrial base, which would in Gandhi's view be ruinous for the people of India.

"At the time of the World Pacifist Meeting held in India in December 1949, it appeared to a number of us that even those leading Indians who considered themselves Gandhi's disciples, as Nehru never had been in a thorough-going sense, were making no effort to carry out the master's programme. They were indeed carrying on a great deal of the Gandhian 'constructive programme' — essentially what we call social work, though with a difference — but there was virtually no serious discussion of even tackling the landownership problem by distinctively Gandhian methods, nor of ways to challenge clearly the Government's military programme or its course in the dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir.

"During the past year and a half or so this situation has changed. Vinoba Bhave, the man who in respect to personal and saintly qualities is today generally regarded as India's nearest to Gandhi, has been touring villages (on foot) and persuading landlords, mostly small, to give him their surplus land, in repentance for the sin they have committed in holding it while surrounded by landless peasants. Vinoba in turn gives the land to the peasants, the transaction being made legal by Government agents who accompany his caravan. At latest report well over 1,00,000 acres * had thus been turned over to landless families.

"This is, of course, a grain of sand in the balance. But the Gandhians have set 2½ million acres as the goal

* The total land collected upto 5-10-'52 is 3,77,955.14 acres. — *Sarvodaya*, 15th October, 1952.

for the current two-year period. There have been cases of landlords turning over a thousand acres to Vinoba. It is conceivable that this movement might begin to 'snowball' and thus the Government might be spurred, backed by public opinion, to inaugurate a radical land reform programme. In any case, there is symbolic value in this attempt to use Gandhian methods in an attack upon landlordism, the locus of economic power — the only alternative to the Communist approach which has been presented to the masses in Asia.

"The other recent notable development among Gandhians in India was initiated early in 1952 by Mira Behn (Madeleine Slade), the daughter of a British admiral, who many years ago joined Gandhi and became one of his best known and most devoted followers. For four years after Gandhi's death she lived in virtually complete retirement and silence. Early this year she issued a 'call' to her fellow Gandhians. She has since beeen propagandizing also among the peasants in northern India for applying 'the whole of Bapu's ideals for a free, self-sufficient happy nation.' To her mind, this includes a 'ruthless' simplification and reduction of Government machinery, disbanding the army and navy, holding in abeyance big development projects such as hydro-electric ones until there is assurance that the peasants will really control them and that they are not chiefly steps towards industrialization and militarization along Western lines.

"If the peasants respond to Mira Behn's programme and the Government does not, she announces that she will call the former to follow her to New Delhi in a civil disobedience campaign. Again it remains to be seen whether this movement will gather strength. But it is in any case another indication that the Gandhians, recovered from the traumatic shock of the Mahatma's death, will make the effort to carry on his non-violent revolutionary programme and now recognize that this requires being in political opposition to Nehru, no matter how great their personal affection for him and, indeed, his for many among them.

"If a movement to establish a non-violent, demilitarized nation that would break the feudal base of economic power by non-violent methods were to gain strength and momentum, it would clearly seem to be the 'third force' over against a capitalistic, militaristic West on the one hand, and the Stalinist pseudo revolution on the other. There are indications that this is the conclusion towards which the Socialist Party of India is tending. Its young people, wearing their red caps, have been in Vinoba Bhave's walking parties and its leading spokesmen have stated that Socialists in India and elsewhere should give much more serious study than they have both to Gandhi's ideas of a village-centred economy and to the possibilities of achieving basic social change by non-violent methods.

The Time Factor

"There are students of the Indian scene who would say that the approach of the reawakened Gandhians may be sound in theory and their type of society on which mankind must eventually reach, but that it is inconceivable that their work should progress rapidly enough to keep the masses from turning to communism in the present era unless Nehru's programme succeeds. Unless, in other words, the standard of living is raised with fair rapidity by a combination of Government and private action (with American aid obtained at a not exorbitant price), the land being redistributed but with compensation for present owners, and industries built up but without entailing the evils of extreme industrialization and centralization. In another field this would involve maintaining a military establishment, but a moderate one, and success in avoiding absorption into either the American or the Russian power bloc.

"The Gandhians — and in this one respect I surmise the Cominform would go along with them — would say that the idea that any regime can walk so thin a wire over so disturbed a terrain as Asia presents today, is wishful thinking. But whereas the latter would say this gleefully, the former, for a number of reasons, including their affection for Nehru and their sensitiveness to the difficulties of his task and role, would deliver their verdict regretfully."

KHADI MOVEMENT

[The following is a resolution passed by the Sarva Seva Sangh in its meeting at Pipari (Wardha) on 24-9-'52.]

(a) All India Sarva Seva Sangh, Sevagram, is glad to announce that up till now, approximately 4 lakh acres of land have been received for Bhoodan by Shri Vinoba. From the 14th September last, he has commenced his Bihar tour. The workers of Bihar have decided to give him 4 lakhs acres of land. The Sangh hopes that this target too will be attained.

People have responded favourably to the decision taken by the Sarva Seva Sangh on behalf of the nation at Sevapuri, to collect 25 lakhs acres of land from all over the country before April 1954. And it is hoped that by the time of the next......Sammelan the proportionate share of this target will be attained.

This decision is but the first step towards the fulfilment of the great objective of the Bhoodan Yajna, namely, just and equitable distribution of land. In order that it may be accomplished as early as possible, the Sangh feels that there is a need for the people to work with redoubled celerity and vigour.

(b) The last portion of the resolution on Bhoodan Yajna envisages the need of encouraging Khadi and other village industries. This is so, because of the fact that for establishing the Sarvodaya society wherein there will be no exploitation and for banishing poverty and unemployment permanently from our midst, the development of Khadi and other village industries is essential. In the opinion of the Sangh, there is no other effective way for solving the problems of hunger and unemployment which have, of late, created a threatening situation in this country, than Khadi and village industries.

The Sangh has to say with regret that although the production of Khadi is being slowly reduced during the last six months, certified Khadi worth 75 lakhs of rupees and yarn worth 20 lakhs of rupees are now lying unsold all over the country and nearly one and a half lakh of spinners of the institutions affiliated with the All India Spinners Association have been thrown out of work. The Sangh is sure that these and thousands of other people who live in the famine-affected areas, can be usefully employed in Khadi work.

The Sarva Seva Sangh whole-heartedly welcomes and endorses the Khadi movement started by the All India Spinners Association from the 14th September on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti. The movement contemplates that in order to ensure employment to all in the village, (i) some land should be given to every villager in addition to some work in some cottage industry ; (ii) all the processes of producing articles

of primary necessity as food, clothing and shelter should be done in the village itself; (iii) that the Government should be requested to see that the village industries do not suffer from the competition of the mill-made articles and in order to ensure that the mills do not compete with the village industries a boycott movement should be organized in every village by the village people; and (iv) that those who have land should donate land to the Bhoodan Yajna, so that the landless can have land. The programme includes a village to village campaign by the Khadi workers with a view to popularizing the movement. The Sarva Seva Sangh appeals to the people and the Government to do their duty by co-operating with this movement.

THIN END OF THE WEDGE?

A friend of the poor writes from Bombay to inform me that there is a move from certain members of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, to requisition a meeting of the Chamber to consider a resolution requesting Government of Bombay to repeal the Prohibition Act. He sends me a copy of the notice issued by the Secretary of the Indian Merchants' Chamber and remarks to say that ultimately the cat is out of the bag of those that have been of late agitating against the Sales Tax and the Motor Vehicle Tax of the State of Bombay. The notice is reproduced below:

"Bombay, 10th October 1952

"**Notice to the Members of the Chamber**

"Pursuant to a Requisition received from Shri Jal Cooper and 60 other members, a Special General Meeting of the members of the Chamber will be held on Tuesday, the 21st October 1952 at 5 p.m. (S.T.) (or immediately after the termination of the Second Quarterly General Meeting the same evening) at the Office of the Chamber to consider the same. (The Requisition is reproduced below):

"**Requisition**

"11th September 1952

"As the Government of Bombay is finding it increasingly difficult to meet the financial obligations of the State in connection with several development schemes launched for the welfare of the Bombay State subjects, we the following members of the Chamber hereby give you notice under Rule 10 to requisition a Special General Meeting as soon as possible to consider and adopt the following resolution:

'Resolved that this meeting of the members of the Indian Merchants' Chamber recommends the Government of Bombay to repeal the Prohibition Act, AS A TEMPORARY MEASURE, until the State's financial position is improved'."

No comments are necessary. The people must be forewarned of this thin end of the wedge, from the mercantile community.

Abu, 23-10-'52 MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

PS.

After the above was written I saw the report of the I. M. Chamber's meeting of Oct. 21, in the *Times of India*, (Oct. 23). It shows that the fears that were in the minds of many people regarding the attitude of the mercantile class about prohibition were substantially true and justified. The original resolution of Shri Jal Cooper and others, bluntly truthful as it was, seems to have been camouflaged with necessary dose of verbiage to show that the I.M.C. was for prohibition, but that really it did not wish well with it is patently clear. The main purpose of the original resolution is fully maintained by the so-called amendments. I have still to see the text of the resolution; hence I may not comment further upon it at present.

Abu, 27-10-'52 M. P.

IF I WERE DICTATOR

(*By Gandhiji*)

If I was appointed dictator for one hour for all India, the first thing I would do would be to close without compensation all the liquor shops, destroy all the toddy palms such as I know them in Gujarat, compel factory owners to produce humane conditions for their workmen and open refreshment and recreation rooms where these workmen would get innocent drinks and equally innocent amusements. I would close down the factories if the owners pleaded want of funds. Being a teetotaller I would retain my sobriety in spite of the possession of one hour's dictatorship and therefore arrange for the examination of my European friends and diseased persons who may be in medical need of brandy and the like at State expense by medical experts and where necessary, they would receive certificates which would entitle them to obtain the prescribed quantity of the fiery waters from certified chemists. The rule will apply *mutatis mutandis* to intoxicating drugs.

For the loss of revenue from drinks, I would straightway cut down the military expenditure and expect the Commander-in-Chief to accommodate himself to the new condition in the best way he can. The workmen left idle by the closing of factories, I would remove to model farms to be immediately opened as far as possible in the neighbourhood of the factories unless I was advised during that brief hour that the State could profitably run the factories under the required conditions and could therefore take over from the owners.

Young India, 25-6-'31

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